

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OLC 75-3204

18 December 1975

Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance  
and Economic Policy  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Knowing that you share my concern over disclosures which may be harmful to this Agency's foreign intelligence mission, I am writing with reference to the story by Marilyn Berger in the 17 December 1975 final edition of The Washington Post which carries a number of details from the testimony of Mr. William Nelson, the Agency's Deputy Director for Operations, before your Subcommittee yesterday.

The leaks from yesterday's session were made by someone not associated with this Agency who decided on their own what is and what is not sensitive. While it is recognized that there can be honest differences of opinion concerning what constitutes sensitive intelligence information, the National Security Act of 1947 explicitly holds the Director of Central Intelligence responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure.


I am aware of the strong feelings concerning the general subject which was discussed and understand the natural tendencies for advocates to present facts which buttress their case. But I would be less than fair with you and the Senate unless I also reported the disconcerting effect of irresponsible leaks of information which I truly judge to be sensitive and which has occurred in the present case.



I indicated to Chairman Sparkman and Senator case in a similar incident that publicity of this sort obviously casts serious doubts on my ability to provide sensitive information to the Foreign Relations Committee, its Subcommittees, and its staff. I am sending a copy of this letter to Chairman Sparkman and Senator Case as it adds to the previous expression of concern which is covered in my letter of 10 November 1975 also enclosed for your information. I would appreciate any suggestions you can provide me as to how information of this sensitive nature can be protected in the future.

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Sincerely,



W. E. Colby  
Director

Enclosure

cc: Honorable John Sparkman  
Honorable Clifford Case

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